



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

ICE RETURNS 63 CRIMINAL ALIENS TO PAKISTAN

New Orleans Detention and Removal Officers work closely with Pakistani government

NEW ORLEANS—Pakistani nationals who were illegally living in the United States were returned to their home country Tuesday by Detention and Removal Operations here, a program within U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

ICE chartered an aircraft to fly the 63 Pakistanis, who had exhausted their legal appeals, from the United States to Islamabad.

Craig Robinson, field office director for ICE New Orleans Detention and Removal Operations, noted the cooperative effort with Pakistan. “The Pakistani government provided outstanding support to help make this an especially successful mission,” he said. “We work closely with numerous countries using ICE’s unique enforcement tools, such as the immigration laws, to promote a higher level of security in the U.S. Our number-one priority is removing criminal aliens from the United States.” Robinson heads the ICE New Orleans Detention and Removal Operations office, which includes the five-state area of: Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas and Tennessee.

The government of Pakistan worked with U.S. officials to authorize travel documents for approximately 90 criminal aliens, and coordinate logistics for the flight. “The travel document unit, the Department of State personnel and the budget folks all worked very hard to make this major logistical effort come to fruition,” said Robinson. “The coordination involved was first-rate and provided us a template for us to use in future operations.” A Pakistani government official escorted the aliens in the plane to help explain the removal process to those being returned.

This repatriation represents the latest in a series of collaborations between Pakistan and the U.S. within the last few years, resulting in the successful repatriation of more than 140 criminal Pakistani nationals from throughout the United States.

Pakistani government officials also emphasized the importance of intergovernmental cooperation in the effort. "Almost all of these individuals wanted to return home as quickly as possible and be reunited with their families," said Mr. Ahmad Farooq, vice consul at the Los Angeles-based Pakistan Consulate General. "Our priority is to ensure their swift return with dignity and honor."

These removals demonstrate ICE's commitment to restoring integrity to the nation's immigration system, which is reflected in a record year of deportations. ICE formally removed more than 160,000 aliens nationally in fiscal year 2004. More than half of those were criminal aliens.

ICE effects its deportations aboard both commercial and government aircraft. The government's aircraft is run by the U.S. Marshal Service, and is called the Justice Prisoner and Alien Transportation System (JPATS). JPATS is one of the largest transporters of prisoners in the world and handles hundreds of requests every day to move prisoners and criminal aliens nationally and internationally.

There is an automatic 10-year bar against deported aliens from legally re-entering the U.S. "Anyone caught in the U.S. by any law enforcement office after having been previously deported will be presented by ICE officers to the U.S. Attorney for prosecution," said Robinson. "Reentry after deportation is a felony that carries a possible 20-year prison sentence."

This week's flight was the latest in a series of recent removal missions the New Orleans office has coordinated with the support of foreign governments and other ICE components.

ICE

ICE, the primary investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security, was established to bring a unified focus to the enforcement of U.S. immigration and customs laws, with the principal goal of preventing violations by terrorists and other criminals who threaten the nation's security.